



# ROLL CALL

Covering Capitol Hill Since 1955

[HOME](#) | [SITE MAP](#) | [ABOUT US](#) | [CUSTOMER CARE](#)  
[SUBSCRIBE](#) | [CLASSIFIEDS](#) | [ADVERTISE](#) | [LINKS](#)

November 04, 2002

## Around the Hill

### Caucus Courts Diversity

#### Asian Group Finds Strength in Numbers

By Diwata Fonte

If the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus allowed only Members of Asian descent, the entire caucus would fit in a minivan.

But because the caucus keeps its rules flexible to include any Member - provided he or she has a committed interest in Asian-Pacific-American issues - the membership numbers 113, or one-fifth of Congress.

The tactic makes sense to many in the caucus: "In Congress, numbers mean clout. If you don't have large numbers, it's tough to have much influence on the process, unless it's a close vote," said Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), who belongs to both the Asian caucus and the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

The catalyst for the growth is the chairman, Rep. David Wu (D-Ore.), who has invited Members of all backgrounds from all regions of the country to join. The membership has tripled since Wu's term began in 2001.

All three major caucuses representing minorities allow non-ethnic Members to join as associate members. But the Asian caucus is the only one that extends full voting membership privileges to Members with significant Asian-American constituencies, meaning all members can vote on caucus policy and even serve as chairman.

"It's all about building bridges to a larger group, most of whom are not [of] Asian descent," Wu said.

Such relationships are necessary, he said, because Asian-Pacific-American issues can get lost among all the issues swirling around Congress. He said almost half of the Members he approaches do not even know the caucus, which was founded in 1994, exists.

Members "get pulled in 20 different directions at one time," Wu

### Breaking News

[Roll Call Daily](#)

### NEWS

[Heard on the Hill](#)

[Around the Hill](#)

### OPINION

[Morton Kondracke](#)

[Stuart Rothenberg](#)

[Karlyn Bowman](#)

[Norman Ornstein](#)

[Cartoons](#)

### POLITICS

[Campaign News](#)

[At the Races](#)

[Moving Targets](#)

[Under the Radar](#)

### Policy Briefings

### Special Features

[Casualty List](#)

[Constituent  
Services](#)

said. "Unless someone grabs you by the lapels and commands your attention, you're not going to know about it. I guess you could say I've been grabbing people by their lapels and finding that there is a significant amount of interest in Asian-Pacific-American issues."

Rep. Mike Honda (D-Calif.), the caucus' vice chairman, said Asian-American populations tend to be concentrated in urban areas in a few states. "It's not totally surprising that some areas of the country may not be fully understanding of the issues and concerns of Asian-Americans," he said. "That's why it's important to raise visibility."

The seven Asian-descent representatives hail from Hawaii, California, American Samoa, Guam and Oregon. The "new caucus," as Wu calls it, includes representatives from 34 states now sprinkled throughout the Midwest, South and Eastern regions. Members include Reps. Baron Hill (D-Ind.) and James Clyburn (D-S.C.), who represent constituencies with less than one-half of 1 percent Asian-Americans.

Amy Wok Mok, the president of the Asian Cultural Center in Austin, Texas, learned of the caucus during Wu's visit to Texas. As a result, she urged her Congressman, Rep. Lloyd Doggett (D-Texas), to join the caucus early this year.

"I wanted him to know that Asian Pacific Americans in Texas are interested in being part of the process," she said.

Doggett now forwards caucus activity, such as proposals addressing Asian-Americans in higher education, to her organization.

The caucus' outreach to non-Asian Members of Congress serves as a stand-in for traditional Asian representation in Congress, since a flood of Asian-American politicians is not predicted. Not including incumbents, only one Asian-American, competitive challenger Stan Matsunaka (D) in Colorado, is running for Congress this election cycle, said Rodney Salinas, president of Rainmaker Political Group, which specializes in Asian-American politics.

Active recruitment within Congress is not as vital to the Congressional Black Caucus and Hispanic caucus because they have stronger showings in Congress, according to CBC Chairwoman Eddie Bernice Johnson (D-Texas), who is also a member of the Asian caucus. The CBC and the CHC have 38 and 18 members, respectively.

To Wu, his strategy parallels what all Asian-American politicians must do to succeed at the national level. They must broaden their appeal because they can't rely solely on the Asian-American vote to win. Contrary to other minority Members, Wu said, Asian-American politicians usually do not represent districts where minorities of all ethnic backgrounds comprise a majority.

None of the Asian-descent Members of Congress has a majority of Asian-Americans in their constituency. The only Member with a majority of Asian-Americans is Rep. Neil Abercrombie (D-Hawaii), according to the Almanac of American Politics. The top concentrations of Asian-Americans are in Hawaii, California and New York.

Becerra, who has an Asian constituency of 20 percent, said it was natural for him to join. Even though he's not of Asian descent, he has worked on Filipino veterans' benefits, Japanese Latin Americans internment, and North and South Korean family reunification through the caucus.

"The organization provides an opportunity to find like-minded people who will work with them, find co-sponsors," Wu said. "That's a healthy thing, and it helps raise the profile of certain APA issues."

---

## **Election Night Parties Planned on the Hill**

As the ballots roll in and the polls close around the nation Tuesday evening, Democrats and Republicans alike will flock to election night parties across Capitol Hill.

While the national committees will host invitation-only parties, there's still a number of places to kick back and watch the results. Here's a list of what's happening.

### **Bullfeathers**

Bullfeathers, 410 First St. SE, will offer mixed drinks made with Jack Daniels or Captain Morgan, and Sam Adams draft beers for \$2.50. The kitchen will stay open late and will offer a \$9.95 prime rib special. The televisions will be tuned to election coverage until the bar closes around 2 a.m.

### **Democrats of a New Generation**

DNG kicks off its election shindig at 6 p.m. at My Brother's Place, 237 Second St. NW. The bar features \$2 beer specials. Open until 10 p.m.

### **Democratic National Committee**

Invitation-only for DNC, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee at the National Democratic Club, 30 Ivy St. SE.

### **Hawk and Dove**

The bar's dozen or so televisions will be tuned into coverage on CNN, C-SPAN and MSNBC. Election night specials include pints of the bar's own Hawk Ale for \$3.25 and Bud Ice for \$2 until midnight. Test your political prowess by entering the Hawk and Dove/Voice of the

your political prowess by entering the Hawk and Dove Voice of the Hill Political Prognostication Contest, with prizes for top picks. The bar, 329 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, closes at 2 a.m.

**League of Conservation Voters**

The election returns-watching party at the LCV's headquarters, 1920 L St. NW, begins at 7 p.m. Food and drinks are provided, but party-goers must RSVP at (202) 785-8683.

**National Democratic Club**

Open to NDC members and their guests. Begins at 6 p.m. at 30 Ivy St. SE.

**National Republican Senatorial Committee**

Invitation-only at the NRSC headquarters, 425 Second St. NE.

**Republican National Committee**

Invitation-only at the Capitol Hill Club, 300 First St. SE.

**Tortilla Coast on Capitol Hill**

Tortilla Coast, 400 First St. SE, features its standard Tuesday specials: 50-cent tacos and \$2 bottles of Budweiser. The bar televisions will be tuned to election coverage. Open until 10 p.m.

[Back To Top](#)[Home](#)

---

Copyright 2002 © [Roll Call Inc.](#) All rights reserved.